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INTRODUCTION

Multi-agency coordination between wildland fire protection agencies is an ongoing process in the Southwest. The fire program managers of the various state and federal agencies involved in wildland fire protection meet regularly as the Southwest Coordinating Group (SWCG). This group serves as a forum to review and discuss matters of mutual interest and to develop plans to ensure a coordinated approach is taken relative to wildland fire protection in the states of Arizona, New Mexico, and portions of Oklahoma and Texas. The SWCG members are the Southwest area MAC Group members.

The Southwest Area Interagency Mobilization Guide and the Southwest Area Preparedness Plan provide direction to the manager of the Southwest Coordination Center (SWCC) on the movement of resources between agencies and units to support wildfire suppression needs and maintain response capabilities within the geographic area. State mobilization plans provide direction to agency managers for movement of state resources and maintenance of statewide response capability.

This Operations Handbook includes procedures to guide Multi-Agency Coordination (MAC) activities in those situations where unusual or critical fire danger or resource mobilization requires continuous, daily interaction between agencies to ensure that decisions not covered in existing plans and guides are responsive to the priority interests of the geographic area as a whole.

MISSION

Multi-Agency Coordination (MAC) provides a forum to discuss actions to be taken to ensure that an adequate number of resources are available to meet anticipated needs and to allocate those resources most efficiently during periods of shortage.

The Multi-Agency Coordination forum will ensure for coordinated:

- Incident prioritization,
- Resource allocation and acquisition,
- Contingency planning
- State and federal disaster response,
- Information provided to media and agency heads, and
- Identification and resolution of issues common to all parties

AUTHORITIES

Agency Administrators, by virtue of the executive positions they occupy in their respective agencies, have the authority to order the movement of personnel and equipment under their jurisdiction to maximize the pre-suppression and suppression capabilities of their agencies. This authority has been delegated to the SWCG members.

Fire Program Managers of the respective agencies are authorized within constraints of available funding to manage preparedness activities and coordinate such with other agencies and to move resources between units to best serve the needs of their respective agencies.

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Manager of the Southwest Coordination Center (SWCC), through the Memorandum of Understanding that establishes SWCC as the Geographic Area Coordination Center (GACC), has the authority to move resources across agency boundaries to meet preparedness and suppression needs of the participating agencies. Such movement is limited to actions specified in (1) the SWCC Annual Operating Plan, (2) the Southwest Area Interagency Mobilization Guide and (3) the Southwest Area Preparedness Plan.

MAC Group Members are authorized through delegation from their respective agency administrators, to commit their agency to actions agreed upon during MAC Group deliberations. Their respective agency administrators provide such delegation of authority in writing.

In most instances in the Southwest, the federal or state level agency administrators have designated the fire program manager of their respective agencies the MAC Group member. Since the MAC Group represents agency administrators at federal or state levels, it is recommended that if an agency's fire program manager is not able to serve with the MAC Group, that their replacement be of the stature of a local agency administrator with operational fire background. For example Forest Service forest supervisors or deputies; National Park Service park or monument superintendents or deputies; Bureau of Land Management field managers; state district, area or regional managers; etc., may be designated a MAC Group member by the agency administrator.

Under certain circumstances, MAC Group members may also include representatives from other agencies with jurisdictional responsibilities not represented by one of the MAC agencies. The need for these additional representatives will be reviewed by and agreed to at the time of activation of the MAC Group or as the situation warrants.

ORGANIZATION

The Southwest Area Multi-Agency Coordination System will consist of the designated MAC Group members, the Geographic Area Coordination Center manager. A MAC Group Coordinator, and Support specialists will be requested as the situation dictates.

Decisions of MAC will be disseminated to appropriate state and federal agencies by the Southwest Coordination Center through the coordination system.

The diagram in Appendix 1 displays the flow of information between the MAC Group and the various other components of the Incident Management System. Authorities of each position identified are described in subsequent sections of this Operations Handbook.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Agency Administrator:

- Appoints MAC Group members and issues written delegation of authority (see SWFMB Handbook).
- Supports MAC Group decisions including those that direct incidents to release resources previously assigned to them.
- Resolves disagreements between Incident Unit Administrators and MAC Group.

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MAC GROUP MEMBERS (the MAC Group):

Prior to Activation:

- Develops and revises the SWA MAC Operations Handbook.
- Determines procedures, MAC Group operating location and facility.
- Determines need for additional MAC Group Representation beyond the wildland agencies.
- Selects MAC Group Coordinator.

During Activation:

- Identify issues needing action.
- Establishes priorities for allocation of resources between incidents within the geographic area.
- Develops contingency plans and resolves issues common to all parties.
- Develops procedures to implement National MAC decisions.
- Re-allocates resources between incidents when necessary due to shortages within the system.
- Initiates special actions to alleviate resource shortages to meet anticipated demands.
- Keep agency administrators informed of the situation and of MAC decisions.
- Keep cooperating partners (e.g., state fire marshal, state emergency management, national guard, neighboring states, landowner interest groups) informed of the situation and of MAC decisions.
- Maintains a dialog with the Agency Administrators.

MAC Coordinator:

- Identifies issues needing MAC Group attention.
- Obtains appropriate intelligence information necessary to support MAC activities.
- Ensures sufficient staff is available to support MAC Group activities.
- Ensures adequate and timely identification of specialists needed to support MAC activities.
- Facilitates MAC Group meetings.
- Documents MAC decisions.
- Distributes MAC decisions.
- Maintains permanent records of MAC activities.
- Supervises the support staff.

MAC Supporting Specialist:

- Provides technical information of their specialty relating to the situation.
- Provides following information to assist the MAC members in making their decisions:
 - Current incidents
 - Weather
 - Fire Behavior/Safety
 - Resources – By Incident (On order, filled/unfilled, critical shortages)
 - IC's Report

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- Media/VIP issues
- Agency Issues (Including National MAC Group)

SWCC Manager:

- Recommends activation to SWA MAC as the situation warrants.
- By direction of the SWA MAC, activates the MAC.
- Serves as a non-voting MAC Group member.
- Recommends issues needing MAC action.
- Assembles intelligence information to support MAC activities i.e.,
 - Resources committed (ICS-209 and IRSS reports),
 - Outstanding resource orders,
 - Resources available,
 - Projected need by incident, and
 - Implements decisions as directed by MAC.

State Coordination Centers, Zone Dispatch Centers, and Incident Expanded Dispatch Organizations, Buying Teams or Local Ordering Points:

- Facilitates flow of intelligence information needed to support MAC activities.
- Facilitates flow of MAC decisions to field units, Incident Management Teams and Area Command as appropriate.
- Implements actions associated with MAC decisions as may be appropriate to the dispatch system.

Incident Management Teams and Area Command, Zone Board Chairs:

- Provides accurate information relative to incident status, threats and projections of needs as requested to support MAC activities. (See Appendix 2)
- Implements actions associated with MAC decisions as may be appropriate to the Incident Management Team, Area Command or Zone Board. (See Appendix 3)

GENERAL OPERATION GUIDELINES

MAC Activities by Regional Preparedness Levels:

Planning Level 1 and 2 (Periods of normal fire danger or routine mobilization). Agency fire program managers and the managers of the coordination and dispatch system will monitor daily activity. Normally this will be through review of the daily situation reports from NIFC and SWCC, and state reporting systems. Agency fire program managers will monitor conditions daily and communicate amongst themselves via conference call or regularly scheduled meetings such as those of the Southwest Fire Management Board (SWFMB).

Planning Level 3 (Periods of critical fire danger or active mobilization). At Planning Level 3 or when the activity level reaches a point it is necessary for the MAC Group to discuss actions or to plan strategies to deal with the current situation, the manager of the Southwest Coordination Center may recommend activation of the

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SWA MAC Group. This will allow an opportunity to coordinate agency preparedness or severity actions.

Planning Level 4 and 5 (Periods of multiple agency mobilization resulting in resource shortages). The MAC Group will convene daily and assemble once monthly to discuss resource prioritization and allocations; determine supplemental actions to be taken to enhance resource availability; and to develop an overall common strategy for dealing with the immediate situation.

MAC Group Activation Procedures:

With activation of the SWA MAC Group, the Southwest Coordination Center Director will contact the pre-designated agency representatives.

If pre-designated individuals are not available, the director will contact the appropriate agency administrator through the agency fire program manager and request that a MAC Group member is provided. Alternate members shall have the same agency status, background and skills as the pre-designated individuals they are replacing.

Based on the situation and issues the MAC Group may mobilize the supporting the MAC Group Coordinator and specialists, as appropriate.

MAC Group Working Guidelines When Activated:

- Routine meetings should begin promptly at predetermined times.
- Mac Group members, SWCC Staff, IC's deployed or on ordered stand-by, and Zone Chairs will provide reports.
- Mac Group members only will collaborate on decisions.
- Opportunity will be provided for all to comment and identify issues at the end of the meeting.
- Side decisions will be limited, and pagers and cell phones turned off to minimize distractions.

Attendance and Participation:

Meeting will follow a standard outline. (See Appendix 4)

MAC Group Decision Model:

All issues brought before the MAC Group will be resolved by consensus that will result in one of the following actions:

- Option 1: Make a collaborative decision and assign responsibility and expectation of implementation.
- Option 2: Delegate a decision with expectations of intended outcomes or results to a MAC Group member, the coordinator or staff.

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- Option 3: Defer decision for consideration at a later date (e.g., defer for more information or defer for further development of fire situation).
- Option 4: Determine that the issue is outside the scope of the MAC Group's responsibility. Defer issue to the appropriate organization or individual.

Record Keeping and Documentation:

- Attendance at all MAC Group meetings will be recorded and saved for the permanent record.
- All information presented at MAC meetings will be recorded and retained in the permanent record for the incident period.
- MAC Group decisions and supporting documentation, including option selected, will be recorded and retained in the permanent record.
- All decision criteria used by the MAC Group to prioritize incidents, etc., will be recorded and retained in the permanent record. (Appendix 5)
- The permanent record will be retained at the Southwest Coordination Center.

Follow-Up Responsibilities:

It is the SWCC Director or assigned MAC Group Coordinator responsibility to track assigned actions or deferred decisions to completion and to notify the entire group of status as appropriate.

COMMUNICATING MAC DECISIONS

- All MAC Group decisions will be documented in writing and filed under a sequential numbering system that includes the date of the decision.
- MAC decision documents will be on Southwest Area Coordinating Group letterhead and signed by MAC Group Coordinator or SWFMB Chair.
- MAC decision documents will be distributed to the involved agency heads, incident commanders or other individuals responsible for implementation through the Southwest Coordination Center using the coordination system via FAX or electronic mail.
- The MAC Coordinator will share decisions with the National MAC Coordinator at Boise.

REQUESTING RECONSIDERATION OF MAC DECISIONS

Local agency administrators may ask for reconsideration of MAC Group decisions. Requests for reconsideration must be in writing to the MAC Group Coordinator.

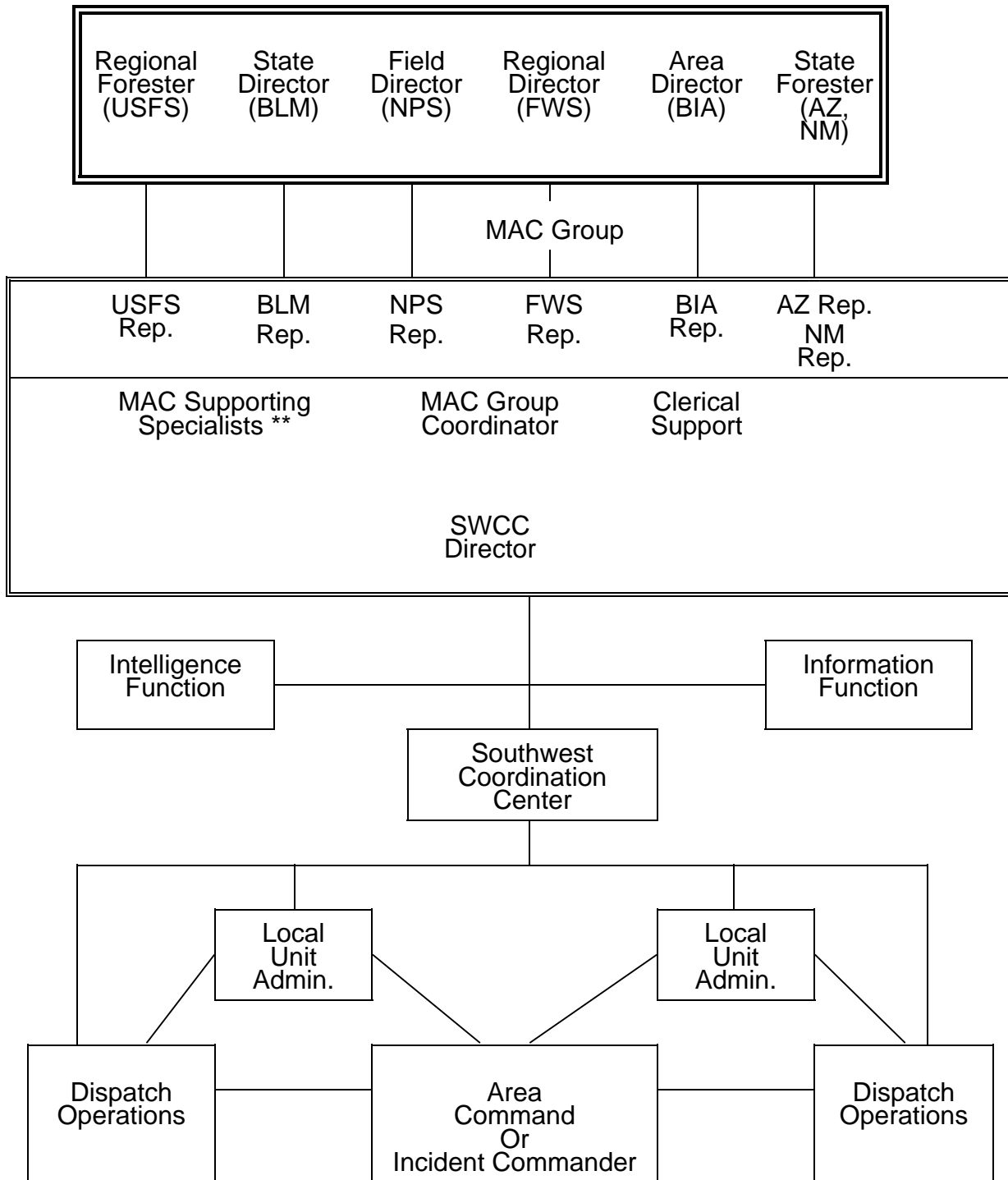
REVIEW AND MODIFICATION OF THE MAC OPERATIONS HANDBOOK

This Operations Handbook will be reviewed annually by the agency fire program managers and modified as necessary.

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APPENDIX 3 Information Flow Diagram*

Agency Administrators



*Does not depict or represent specific agency administrator chain of command

**MAC Supporting Specialists are identified as needed and may include a fire behavior analyst, meteorologist, aviation specialist, comptroller, or fiscal analyst, etc.

MAC Incident Prioritization Criteria

(March 2002 - Chapter 11.1, National Interagency Mobilization Guide)

A. When requested, Geographic Areas will establish priorities for their incidents and wild land fires and report them to NICC. Areas will include consideration for initial attack in their evaluation.

B. The standard criteria to be used in establishing priorities is:

1. Potential to destroy or harm human life
2. Potential to destroy
 - Communities
 - Community infrastructure (including long term effects to economic sustainability and viability, watershed, power supply, recreational card)
 - Historically significant cultural resources
 - Commercial business
 - Principal residence (year-round homes)
 - Non-principal residence (seasonal home, cabins, etc.)
 - Out-buildings (barns, unattached garages, utility buildings, etc.)
3. Potential to adversely impact cultural and natural resource values
4. Probability of meeting incident objectives

IC and Zone Reporting Format

IC Updates

- Fires by size/general area
- Communities/structures at risk (time frames)
- Update on Plans (evacuation, rehab, demob)
- Major Accomplishments
- Problem Areas
- Critical Needs with justification
- Accident/Injury/Illness summary
- Planned Community Meetings
- WFSA Revisions/adjustment to containment date

Zone Updates

- Priorities
- Team Availability
- IA Activity
- Critical Needs

APPENDIX 3 Incident Priorities Chart

PRIORITIES						
Threat Rates	Incident:					
50	Harm human life					
7	Communities					
6	Infrastructure					
5	Historic Resource					
4	Commercial					
3	Principal Residence					
2	Non-principal Residence					
20	Cultural & Natural resource values					
15	Probability of not meeting Incident objectives					
TOTALS						

Relative Risk Rates:

Unknown = 0

Not Applicable = 0

Low = 1

Moderate = 2

High = 3